

## **Fair Political Practices Commission**

**To:** Chairman Randolph; Commissioners Blair, Downey, Karlan and Knox

**From:** Luisa Menchaca, General Counsel  
Lawrence T. Woodlock, Senior Commission Counsel

**Subject:** Pending Litigation

**Date:** January 28, 2005

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### *1. California ProLife Council, Inc. v. Karen Getman et al.*

This action challenges the Act's reporting requirements for express ballot measure advocacy. In October 2000 the Federal District Court for the Eastern District of California dismissed certain counts for standing and/or failure to state a claim, and later granted the FPPC's motion for summary judgment, eliminating further counts in a judgment entered on January 22, 2002. Plaintiff appealed that judgment to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal. The Ninth Circuit rejected plaintiff's legal claims, affirming that the challenged statutes and regulations were not unconstitutionally vague, and that California may regulate ballot measure advocacy upon demonstrating a sufficient state interest in so doing. The Ninth Circuit remanded the matter back to the district court to determine whether California can establish a state interest sufficient to support its committee disclosure rules, and whether the state's disclosure rules are properly tailored to that interest. On December 17, the court heard cross-motions for summary judgment on these questions, and will issue its decision in the near future. Shortly before this hearing, the court vacated the existing trial date of March 7, 2005, and will re-schedule a trial if the dispute is not completely resolved on summary judgment.

### *2. FPPC v. Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, et al.*

The FPPC alleges in this action that the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians contributed more than \$7.5 million to California candidates and ballot measure campaigns between January 1 and December 31, 1998, but did not timely file major donor reports disclosing those contributions, and likewise failed to disclose more than \$1 million in late contributions made between July 1, 1998 and June 30, 2002. The FPPC later amended the complaint to add a cause of action alleging that the tribe failed to disclose a \$125,000 contribution to the Proposition 51 campaign on the November 5, 2002 ballot. Defendants responded to the lawsuit by filing a motion to quash service, alleging that they could not be civilly prosecuted for violating the Political Reform Act because of tribal sovereign immunity. On February 27, 2003 the Honorable Loren McMaster of the Sacramento County Superior Court ruled in the FPPC's favor. On April 7, defendants filed a petition for writ of mandate in the Third District Court of Appeal, challenging the decision of the trial court. The petition was summarily

denied on April 24, 2003, whereupon defendants filed a petition for review in the California Supreme Court. On July 23, 2003, the Supreme Court granted review and transferred the case back to the Court of Appeal, where oral argument was heard before Justices Blease, Sims, and Davis. On March 3, 2004, the Court issued its opinion, affirming the Superior Court's decision after concluding that "the constitutional right of the State to preserve its republican form of government trumps the common law doctrine of tribal immunity." On April 6, 2004, Blue Lake Rancheria and Mainstay Business Solutions, a Government Sponsored Enterprise of the Blue Lake Rancheria, filed with the California Supreme Court a request for depublication of the court of appeal decision. Associate Justice Sims of the Third District Court of Appeal, author of the opinion, filed a letter with the Supreme Court on April 19, 2004, requesting that the depublication request be denied on the ground that it had not been properly served on the Third District Court of Appeal, depriving him of an opportunity to respond to the depublication request. In the interim, on April 13, 2004, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians filed a Petition for Review in the California Supreme Court. On June 23, 2004, the Supreme Court granted the Petition for Review. On September 23, 2004, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians filed its opening brief with the Supreme Court and on December 30, 2004, the FPPC filed its opposition brief. The tribe obtained an extension of time, and now has until March 2, 2005 to file a reply brief.

### *3. FPPC v. Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria*

In this action the FPPC alleges that the Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria failed to file major donor semi-annual campaign statements in the years 1998, 1999, and 2001, involving more than \$500,000 in political contributions to statewide candidates and propositions, and that defendants failed to disclose more than \$350,000 in late contributions made in October 1998. The complaint was originally filed on July 31, 2002, and was amended on October 7, 2002. On January 17, 2003, defendants filed a motion to quash service, based on its claim of tribal sovereign immunity. On May 13, 2003, the Honorable Joe S. Gray of the Sacramento County Superior Court entered an order in favor of defendants. On July 14, 2003, the FPPC appealed this decision to the Third District Court of Appeal, where the matter was scheduled for oral argument. The Attorney General filed an amicus brief in support of the FPPC's position. On July 16, 2004, the Commission's appellate counsel was apprised that the tribe had secured new counsel to pursue this appeal and would be seeking a continuance of the oral argument date. On July 29, 2004, the Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria filed a substitution of attorneys replacing Monteau & Peebles with Lang, Richert & Patch of Fresno, as appellate counsel. Concurrent with the filing of the substitution of attorneys, a request for continuance of the date for oral argument was made. The court granted a continuance to October 19, 2004, at 9:30 a.m. The court heard oral argument on October 19, 2004, and on October 27, 2004, issued a decision in favor of the Commission overturning the trial court's granting of defendant's motion to quash. The tribe filed a petition for review with California Supreme Court which was granted on January 12, 2005; however, any action on the case has been deferred pending the outcome of the Agua Caliente case.

### *4. FPPC v. American Civil Rights Coalition, et al.*

In a lawsuit filed in the Sacramento County Superior Court on Sept. 3, 2003, the FPPC alleges that the American Civil Rights Coalition (“ACRC”) and its CEO Ward Connerly failed to file campaign statements reporting the source of almost \$2 million contributed to promote the passage of Proposition 54 on the Oct. 7 ballot. An application for intervention in the lawsuit was filed on September 16 by a group known as the “DOE Class” of past and potential contributors to ACRC, seeking among other things to postpone a hearing on the FPPC’s motion for preliminary injunction to an unspecified later date. The court went forward with the injunction hearing on September 19, 2004, denying the FPPC’s motion on the ground that the factual record was not sufficiently developed to warrant a preemptive remedy. Defendants next brought a special motion to strike the complaint under Code of Civil Procedure § 425.16. On December 1, 2003, the Superior Court denied this special motion. On December 3, 2003 defendants appealed to the Third District Court of Appeal. On August 16, 2004, the court of appeal issued its decision affirming the trial court’s denial of defendant’s special motion. The case is now scheduled for a trial setting conference in the Superior Court on May 2, 2005.

*5. California Republican Party, et al. v FPPC et al.*

On October 12, 2004 the California Republican Party, the California Democratic Party, and the Orange County Republican Party filed a Complaint in the Federal District Court seeking injunctive and declaratory relief from two provisions of the Act, sections 84503 and 84506, which require a committee paying for ballot measure advertisements to identify their two highest contributors of \$50,000 or more. On October 20, 2004 plaintiffs amended their Complaint, and noticed a motion for Temporary Restraining Order to be heard on October 26, 2004. The FPPC filed its Opposition to this motion on October 22. The Attorney General’s office represented the Commission at the hearing before the Honorable Frank C. Damrell, Jr. The following day, the Court issued a preliminary injunction enjoining the Commission from enforcing the provisions of the Act above against plaintiffs. The Commission filed its Answer on December 3, 2004.